

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Lily Haight with local news for February 9, 2022.

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Jefferson County Public Health reported 24 new cases of COVID-19 yesterday. This brings our total case count, since the beginning of the pandemic, up to 2,777. There are currently 137 active cases in isolation and five Jefferson County residents are hospitalized. Public health reported one new death yesterday, bringing our total to 24. The individual was a male in their 60s who was unvaccinated and had chronic medical conditions.

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Now for an update on the Cook Avenue construction project, called the Trailcrest Development. The city council voted unanimously Monday night to approve the final plat alteration for Division 2 and 3 of the Trailcrest Project. This vote was described by city planner John McDonagh as purely administrative, as the council has no power to change any aspect of the development project, which was set in stone in 2011 by a hearings examiner who approved the developer's permits. In other words: it's much too late to change anything about the project, which McDonagh said could be completed by the end of February.

The first phase of development included building Trail Crest Road and 14 parcels to build on. The road sat empty for some time, until last year when the first house went up. That house sold for over \$700,000. The second and third phases include the construction of 58 lots total. The lots vary in size, but none are smaller than 10,000 square feet. In total, the Trail Crest site is roughly 48 acres, with about 15 acres set aside as "open space." This phase of the project only includes installing infrastructure for the development, which does include installing a sidewalk on that particular section of Cook Avenue. After that is complete, Richmond American Homes will begin building houses on the parcels.

As mayor David Faber explained at the meeting Monday night, whatever codes happen to be in place when a developer gets a permit for a project, those are the building codes that the developer gets to stick with as they complete the project. On top of that, McDonagh explained that our city uses a hearings examiner to determine whether a permit can be approved for a project like this one. That takes the power away from the city council, who might make decisions for political reasons and open the city up to potential lawsuits. Therefore, as concerned neighbors have brought complaints to city council about this project – including the lack of affordable housing it is producing, and the potential environmental impacts of building into the bluff on Cook – council members have been rather powerless to do anything about these concerns.

Thinking to the future, city council member Ben Thomas asked if there have been any substantial changes made to the city building code since this project's permit was approved. McDonagh replied that there haven't been any changes made that would affect a developer from getting a similar permit today. However, the city planning commission has enacted a number of changes to things like cottage developments – such as lowering lot size requirements. McDonagh did note that it is possible to make changes to code that could require developers to set aside a percentage of their development for affordable housing. The best way to get involved in code changes, he said, is to attend planning commission meetings and make suggestions there.

If you'd like to get a closer look at what the Trail Crest development is going to look like once it's completed, go to the city's website and click on "agendas and minutes" ([https://cityofpt.granicus.com/GeneratedAgendaViewer.php?view\\_id=4&clip\\_id=2328](https://cityofpt.granicus.com/GeneratedAgendaViewer.php?view_id=4&clip_id=2328)). Under Monday night's agenda, you can find plans for the Trail Crest Development ([https://cityofpt.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view\\_id=4&clip\\_id=2328&meta\\_id=196595](https://cityofpt.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=4&clip_id=2328&meta_id=196595)). And as a reminder, the section of Cook Avenue between Elmira and Peary streets is currently closed to through traffic, until work on the road is complete at the end of the month.

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In other housing news: the city council received about five public comments at Monday night's meeting requesting that they update the Temporary Encampment Zoning Code, so that Pat's Place – a transitional supportive housing village made up of wooden tiny-homes on 10th and Rosecrans Streets in Port Townsend – can last longer than the six to eight months that is currently allowed for in the city's code.

Pat's Place is the second temporary housing village project taken on by Bayside Housing and a host of community volunteers, who built a village of tiny homes for people experiencing homelessness to have a roof over their head. The villages are not meant to be a long-term housing solution but, given the lack of affordable housing in Port Townsend and Jefferson County, it can take longer than eight months for someone to find a permanent home here.

Heather Dudley-Nollette, Director of Development at Bayside Housing, was one of several members of the public who sent in a comment on Monday, urging the city council to collaborate with the Infrastructure and Development Committee to update the code. "All of this exceptional forward momentum would be shamefully and needlessly lost," she wrote, "If we did not allow residents and their housing and service providers the critically necessary time they need to heal from circumstantially inherent trauma, and to develop or re-learn important life skills which will ultimately allow them to find and keep permanent housing for life." The city council did not act on this at Monday night's meeting, but Mayor Faber noted that he hopes the council will act on that soon, and that his understanding is the council is in favor of making those changes.

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And that's it for today's local news. KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon Monday through Saturday and at 5pm Monday through Thursday. You can contact us through [news@kptz.org](mailto:news@kptz.org). I'm Lily Haight. Thanks for listening.